



CONVICTION

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living helps Civil Air Patrol members explore a virtue from multiple angles and practice that virtue through a hands-on activity. The combination of analysis and practice helps members internalize the virtue so it stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

Conviction names both a deeply held personal belief and our commitment to such a belief. This forum invites participants to consider their own convictions and asks how those convictions make us better volunteer airmen. Participants should also consider how we can ensure that our units **respect the beliefs of our volunteers, especially when we do not share them.**

PRE-CLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

- Arrange meeting space or test online meeting platform prior to the meeting
- Prepare lesson materials and multimedia resources
- Ensure that Cadet Facilitators have completed online training

ATTENTION GETTER

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES.)

Option 1: Multimedia

Desmond Doss was a “conscientious objector,” an individual who claims the right to refuse the performance of military service on the grounds of freedom of thought, conscience, or religion. Doss wanted to serve his country but did not want to carry a weapon. During Army basic training he was mocked, hazed, ridiculed, and even jailed under the threat of court martial because he refused to carry or use a gun. In this video clip, even his fiancé challenges his personal convictions.

[Play video here: Hacksaw-Ridge-01-prison-scene.mp4]

Doss' fiancée doesn't agree with his refusal to carry a weapon, but she respects his commitment to his personal beliefs. Eventually, Doss was released from jail and allowed to complete basic training. He trained as an Army medic and was deployed to the Pacific Theatre during the final years of WWII where he rescued many wounded soldiers under heavy enemy fire. While serving

his country and displaying enormous courage on the battlefield as a medic, Doss never once carried a weapon and stayed true to his personal beliefs as a conscientious objector.

This lesson is about conviction. Our convictions are our deeply held personal beliefs, like Doss' belief that he should not carry or use a firearm. Conviction is also the name given to our commitment to those beliefs.

Desmond Doss was a man of conviction: he knew what he believed and was faithful to those beliefs, even when the rest of the world seemed to disagree with him. We may not share Doss' beliefs; we may even strongly disagree with him! In fact, **we must note here that Doss' beliefs do not necessarily represent the views of Civil Air Patrol.** Nevertheless, we can admire his conviction as an expression of his integrity.

What are your convictions? How faithful are you to those convictions? And why does your conviction matter to CAP, your community, state, and nation?

Option 2: No Multimedia

Desmond Doss was a World War II-era "conscientious objector" an individual who has claimed the right to refuse the performance of military service on the grounds of freedom of thought, conscience, or religion.

Doss wanted to serve his country but did not want to carry a weapon. During Army basic training he was mocked, hazed, ridiculed, and even jailed under the threat of court martial because he refused to carry or use a gun. Even his fiancée challenged him for stubbornly standing up for his personal beliefs.

Eventually Doss was released from jail and allowed to complete basic training. He trained as an Army medic and was deployed to the Pacific Theatre during the final years of WWII where he rescued many wounded soldiers under heavy enemy fire. While serving his country and displaying enormous courage on the battlefield as a medic, Doss never once carried a weapon and stayed true to his personal beliefs as a conscientious objector.

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UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE III CADET (15 MINUTES.)

Convictions are our deeply held beliefs; conviction is also our commitment to those beliefs. Desmond Doss was convinced that he should not carry or use a firearm.

- Why do you think so many people (including his fellow soldiers and his fiancée) had a problem with Desmond Doss' refusal to carry a weapon?
- Was Desmond Doss a coward for refusing to carry a weapon? Why or why not?
- Did Doss' conviction make him a better soldier or a worse soldier? Why?
- Was Doss' conviction that he shouldn't carry a weapon unreasonable?
- Even if you don't face the same kind of pressure Doss faced, your convictions are probably challenged daily. What makes it difficult for you to stand up for your convictions?

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

- Do we need personal convictions? Aren't the Core Values enough?
- How do the Core Values suggest we should regard convictions – both our own and those of others?
- How does CAP benefit from having members who are faithful to their convictions?
- When your convictions conflict with the practice of your unit (or classroom, family, or community), how can you express your convictions in a respectful manner?
- How can you demonstrate your respect for the convictions of others, especially those convictions that you do not share?
- Some personal convictions are not acceptable for CAP members. Can you think of some examples?
- What makes a conviction unreasonable or unacceptable? How can you respond appropriately to an unreasonable or unacceptable conviction?

ACTIVITY

LED BY SMALL GROUP FACILITATORS OR ONLINE INSTRUCTOR (10-15 MINUTES.)

Civil Air Patrol is a diverse organization. Our members have many different convictions. In your small groups, discuss the following scenarios. Which convictions might be involved? Are the convictions reasonable? What sort of accommodation would you recommend?

- **Saturday Training**

For as long as anyone can remember, your unit has hosted activities on the second Saturday of every month. These are often some of the most exciting events of the year: orientation flights, a rappelling course, and a trip to the local aviation museum. You've noticed that two of the newer cadets never participate in Saturday activities and are missing out on some of the opportunities and challenges of cadet life. When you encourage them to attend, they explain that because of their religious convictions, they cannot participate in Saturday activities. How should you respond?

- **Medical History**

After a squadron meeting, you notice Cadet Curry's parents in a heated, closed-door discussion with the unit commander. Cadet Curry explains the situation to you. She has been looking forward to attending an upcoming encampment, but the application papers include a medical history form. Cadet Curry's parents object strongly to having to share their daughter's medical history with Civil Air Patrol and refuse to complete the form. What might you say to Cadet Curry?

- **Squadron Bar-B-Que**

Every spring, Lt Col Hickory hosts a squadron bar-b-que in a local park on a Friday afternoon. His pulled pork sandwiches, spicy coleslaw, and baked beans are legendary. This year, however, fewer than half of the unit members attended the bar-b-que. Lt Col Hickory feels insulted and doesn't understand why anyone would pass on a squadron bar-b-que. What might you tell him?

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES)

Option 1: Multimedia

Desmond Doss was permitted to stay in the military and serve his country without carrying a rifle. He trained as an Army medic and participated in the battle of Okinawa, unarmed. During the battle for Hacksaw Ridge, Desmond was determined to save as many of the wounded as he could.

[Play video here: [Hacksaw-Ridge-02-Lord-help-me-get-one-more](#)]

Option 2: Desmond Doss' Medal of Honor Citation

Medal of Honor Citation. The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Private First Class Desmond Thomas Doss, United States Army, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the

call of duty from April 29 – 21 May 1945, while serving with the Medical Detachment, 307th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division, in action at Urasoe Mura, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands.

Private First Class Doss was a company aid man when the 1st Battalion assaulted a jagged escarpment 400 feet high. As our troops gained the summit, a heavy concentration of artillery, mortar and machine gun fire crashed into them, inflicting approximately 75 casualties and driving the others back. Pfc. Doss refused to seek cover and remained in the fire-swept area with the many stricken, carrying all 75 casualties one-by-one to the edge of the escarpment and there lowering them on a rope-supported litter down the face of a cliff to friendly hands.

On May 2, he exposed himself to heavy rifle and mortar fire in rescuing a wounded man 200 yards forward of the lines on the same escarpment; and 2 days later he treated 4 men who had been cut down while assaulting a strongly defended cave, advancing through a shower of grenades to within eight yards of enemy forces in a cave's mouth, where he dressed his comrades' wounds before making 4 separate trips under fire to evacuate them to safety.

On May 5, he unhesitatingly braved enemy shelling and small arms fire to assist an artillery officer. He applied bandages, moved his patient to a spot that offered protection from small arms fire and, while artillery and mortar shells fell close by, painstakingly administered plasma. Later that day, when an American was severely wounded by fire from a cave, Pfc. Doss crawled to him where he had fallen 25 feet from the enemy position, rendered aid, and carried him 100 yards to safety while continually exposed to enemy fire.

On May 21, in a night attack on high ground near Shuri, he remained in exposed territory while the rest of his company took cover, fearlessly risking the chance that he would be mistaken for an infiltrating Japanese and giving aid to the injured until he was himself seriously wounded in the legs by the explosion of a grenade. Rather than call another aid man from cover, he cared for his own injuries and waited 5 hours before litter bearers reached him and started carrying him to cover. The trio was caught in an enemy tank attack and Pfc. Doss, seeing a more critically wounded man nearby, crawled off the litter; and directed the bearers to give their first attention to the other man. Awaiting the litter bearers' return, he was again struck, by a sniper bullet while being carried off the field by a comrade, this time suffering a compound fracture of one arm. With magnificent fortitude he bound a rifle stock to his shattered arm as a splint and then crawled 300 yards over rough terrain to the aid station. Through his outstanding bravery and unflinching determination in the face of desperately dangerous conditions, Pfc. Doss saved the lives of many soldiers. His name became a symbol throughout the 77th Infantry Division for outstanding gallantry far above and beyond the call of duty.

Wrap-up Comments

- Desmond Doss was able to display a heroic level of courage because earlier in his life he had developed a rock-solid set of personal core values. His commitment to living out those deep personal convictions enabled him to endure ridicule and persecution, and eventually push past his fear to save the lives of dozens of others, even at the risk of his own life.
- We talk a lot about our Civil Air Patrol core values of Integrity, Excellence, Volunteer Service, and Respect. I want to challenge you to think about your own personal core values. What are some ways you can develop your own set of rock-solid personal

convictions? (Possible responses: Talk about it with parents, chaplain, CDI, commander, pastor/rabbi/imam, etc.; start with CAP's core values and apply them to your own life; read books on leadership and developing core values/personal convictions.)

- You are the upcoming leaders of our nation and our world. Developing solid personal convictions now and consistently living by them will empower you to live and lead with courage.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"A 'no' uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a 'yes' merely uttered to please or, worse, to avoid trouble." - Mahatma Gandhi

"Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct." – Thomas Carlyle

"It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen." – Muhammed Ali

"Constant repetition carries conviction." – Robert Collier

"The trite saying that honesty is the best policy has met with the just criticism that honesty is not policy. The real honest man is honest from conviction of what is right, not from policy."
– Robert E. Lee

"Let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother." – Paul of Tarsus (Romans 14:13)

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Hacksaw Ridge "Lord help me get just one more" video montage by Kimer Lorens and used by permission.

Disclaimer: Desmond Doss' personal opinions, as represented in the film *Hacksaw Ridge*, do not necessarily reflect the views of the lesson's authors or Civil Air Patrol.